



Kentucky Department of Education

School Councils and the Achievement Gap

Three-hour training for experienced school-based decision making membership.

Objectives:

- Define Achievement Gap
- Gap and Accountability
- Determining Gap Interventions
- Improving Student Achievement Through Policy Development

Session Overview

This SBDM training session will provide participants an overview of the requirements for closing the achievement gap for all students, as well as an introduction to the concept of novice reduction.

Student Achievement

The school council's mission is to improve student achievement. Each school council must create an environment in their own schools that will result in students achieving at high levels. All policies and decisions by the school council must contribute to achievement of the overall school mission.

These SBDM training materials were developed by the Kentucky Department of Education for use in training school council members in implementing school-based decision making.



Why is closing the achievement gap so important for schools?

First, all students deserve a high quality education. Without addressing achievement gaps, some schools will not get all students to proficiency. Secondly, Kentucky statute (KRS 158.649) requires that schools close achievement gaps. That same statute also requires school councils to examine achievement data, set targets for closing the achievement gap and developing improvement strategies to address the gap targets.

What is an achievement gap?

The definition of achievement gap can be found in KRS 158.649(1). Let's examine the definition.

	"Achievement gap" means a substantive performance difference on each of the tested areas by grade level of the state assessment program between the various groups of students including male and female students, students with and without disabilities, students with and without English proficiency, minority and nonminority students, and students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch and those who are not eligible for free and reduced lunch. [KRS 158.649(1)]
Substantive performance difference....	
Each of the tested areas by grade level of the state assessment program ...	
Between the various groups of students ...	

What is the school council's role in closing achievement gaps?

To understand the school council's role in addressing and closing achievement gaps, we need to look back at the statute.

KRS 158.649(5)

By April 1, 2003, and each April 1 in odd-numbered years thereafter, the school council ... with the involvement of parents, faculty, and staff, shall review the data and revise the consolidated plan to include the biennial targets, strategies, activities, and a time schedule calculated to eliminate the achievement gap among various groups of students to the extent it may exist. The plan shall include but not be limited to activities designed to address the following areas:

- a) Curriculum alignment within the school and with schools that send or receive the school's students;
- b) Evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs and support proficient student work;
- c) Professional development to address the goals of the plan;
- d) Parental communication and involvement;
- e) Attendance improvement and dropout prevention; and
- f) Technical assistance that will be accessed.

Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, the reporting requirement in this subsection shall be October 1 of each year.

Look at each activity that is to be included in the school improvement plan. Each area is as important as the next to have a composite picture of how the school is to address improvement and closing achievement gaps.

Think of it as a large city. Large metropolitan areas consist of multiple neighborhoods joined together. Each neighborhood has unique characteristics that add to the city as a whole. An example of this is New York. New York consists of five boroughs: Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island. Manhattan is one unique borough with multiple neighborhoods that join together to create the whole. The Upper East Side neighborhood is different than Greenwich Village; Harlem is different than Chinatown; however, as a whole they form Manhattan.

Think of each of the areas noted in the above statute as a neighborhood in the school's improvement plan. What would be the unique and specific characteristics that would shape this component of the improvement plan?



Curriculum alignment within the school and with schools that send or receive the school's students;

Evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs and support proficient student work;

Professional development to address the goals of the plan;

Parental communication and involvement;

Attendance improvement and dropout prevention; and

Technical assistance that will be accessed.

Gap and Accountability

The Unbridled Learning accountability model is anchored in college and career readiness for all students. The assessment and accountability model is a balanced approach that incorporates all aspects of school and district work. Kentucky's educational reforms are based upon the principle that schools must be held accountable for the progress of their students.

Open a web browser and find your most recent school report card data. You can find the link on the Kentucky Department of Education's home page or at the following link:

<http://applications.education.ky.gov/SRC/>

The first page of the school report card is your profile page. Above the demographic information are tabs that resemble tabs on file folders. The arrows below point to the two tabs that we will be examining during this training session.

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KENTUCKY SCHOOL REPORT CARD
College/Career-Readiness for All

Profile Accountability Assessment Program Review Learning Environment Finance Delivery Targets Career and Technical Education

500 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
Phone: (502) 564-3141
Fax: (502) 564-5680

Kentucky
State Membership: 655,642

School Year: 2014-15
Commissioner: Kevin Brown

Last Updated Date: 04/10/2015

2014-15 State Board Members

2014-15 State Board Members			
Roger L. Marcum (Chair)			
Trevor Bonnstetter	Grayson Boyd	Leo Calderon	Debra L. Cook
Sam Hinkle	David K. Karem	Robert King	Jonathan Parrent
Nawanna B. Privett	William Twyman		

Accountability Performance

Level	Year	Overall Score	Percentile in KY	Classification ¹	Rewards and Assistance Category ²
State Overall	2014-2015	68.0	81	Proficient	
	2013-2014	67.6	79		

The first tab we will be looking at is the "Delivery Target" tab. Click on the "Delivery Target" tab. This will take you to specific gap results for your school.

Below is a chart to organize your school targets. The "Delivery Target" tab will provide you with your school's actual score and the goal. To determine the gap, subtract your actual score from the delivery target.

Content: _____

Level: _____

	Actual Score 2014-2015	Delivery Target 2015-2016	Gap between all students and....
All students			
Male students			
Female students			
White (non-Hispanic) students			
African-American students			
Hispanic students			
Asian students			
Limited English proficiency (LEP) students			
Free/reduced-price meals (F/R) students			
Students with disabilities			
Non-duplicated gap group			

Understanding your largest gap area will assist in focusing your improvement strategies. However, taking time to recognize students as more than a score on a spreadsheet will also close the achievement gap.

Below are the thought of Sonia Nieto¹.

The most important characteristic students look for in educators is caring as evidenced by:

- The time they take in teaching their student.
- Their patience.
- How well they prepare their classes.
- How they go about making classes interesting.
- The time they take to listen to students and answer their questions.
- The time they take for extracurricular activities (e.g., faculty advisor, special programs).
- Their attention to calling on and valuing students' language and cultural knowledge.
- Their willingness to learn about the cultural history of others.
- The demonstration of knowledge of and comfort with other cultures.

Reflection

Look back at your gap areas. What is your largest gap group? Look again at the characteristics Sonia Nieto listed. What relationships do you see? What do you need to consider as a possibility for the gaps in student achievement at your school? What does this data not tell you?

Determining Interventions

The school council's mission is to improve student achievement. Each school council must create a school environment that will allow students to achieve at high levels. The SBDM statute also holds each school council accountable for how well they meet this

¹ Nieto, S. (2008). Affirming diversity: the sociopolitical context of multicultural education. Allyn & Bacon: New York.

responsibility. All policies and decisions made by a school council must contribute to achievement of the overall mission.

We looked earlier at gap groups. Now, let's look at the data on the "Assessment" tab and specifically at the percentage of students scoring novice versus those that are at the proficient-distinguished level. To determine the difference, subtract novice from proficient/distinguished. As a note, if the difference is a negative number, this means you have more students scoring novice than proficient/distinguished.

Subject: _____

	Novice	Proficient – Distinguished	Difference
All students			
Male students			
Female students			
White (non-Hispanic) students			
African-American students			
Hispanic students			
Asian students			
Limited English proficiency (LEP) students			
Free/reduced-price meals (F/R) students			
Students with disabilities			
Non-duplicated gap group			

Novice reduction is a new priority for the Kentucky Department of Education. As part of the 2016 improvement planning cycle, schools and districts were to address novice reduction.

So, why now the push for reducing novice scores?

On June 12, 2015, former Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday laid out the need for novice reduction in Kentucky in his blog post titled, "A Moral Imperative." The text of that post can be found on the next page:

This week, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) presented several regulations for final review by the Interim Joint Committee on Education. The regulations are the final step in revisions to the Unbridled Learning Accountability Model that was developed five years ago as a response to requirements in Senate Bill 1 (2009). One of the major changes to the regulations was the addition of a new measure called novice reduction. Several legislators had questions about this new measure and I thought you might be interested in understanding why the new measure was added.

For the past three years, KDE has used the Unbridled Learning accountability model. One of the concerns we have heard from education groups, civil rights groups and conservative groups is that the accountability model was not pushing hard enough on closing achievement gaps. While the accountability model did have a measure of efforts to close the achievement gap, many groups felt that individual groups of students were not as evident as they had been under No Child Left Behind. As I looked at the results from 2014 assessments, I became convinced that we needed more focus on the performance of individual groups of students.

With our state assessments, students receive ratings of distinguished, proficient, apprentice or novice. The novice level is very low and represents student performance that is several levels below college- and career-ready work. Here are some startling numbers.

Percentage Novice Students Group	Elementary Reading	Elementary Math	Middle School Reading	Middle School Math	High School English II	High School Algebra II
All students	21	17	21	17	34	24
African-American	38	31	40	33	54	37
Hispanic	28	22	29	22	43	28
Migrant	32	25	39	27	58	35
Limited English	43	32	61	43	88	45
Free/Reduced Meals	27	23	29	23	45	32
Individual Education Plan	40	38	51	45	73	55
Gap Group	27	23	29	23	45	33

While the percentages are very concerning, the real numbers are even more alarming. We have more than 80,000 students performing at the novice level in reading and more than 60,000 students performing at the novice level in math. These are the students who will be challenged to complete high school. These are the students who will not reach college- and career-readiness. These are the students who will need social services. These are the students who have a high likelihood of

incarceration. These are the students that Kentucky must care more about and provide intervention for before it is too late.

KDE will be focusing efforts on helping schools and districts implement specific strategies to address this high percentage of novice students. We will provide specific support around reading and numeracy programs. We will provide support for positive behavior interventions to address student behavior that interferes with learning. We will provide support for culturally responsive instruction. We will also provide a significant focus on accountability and incentives for schools, districts, and educators for helping move novice students to apprenticeship levels or above.

This issue is moral imperative for our Commonwealth and a major civil rights issue for our communities.

Think back to your delivery target and the number of novice students you have.

What gap group is the largest?	
What group has the largest number of novice students?	
How do these compare?	

Now that we have this data, let's write a possible novice reduction goal.

Reduce novice scores in _____ (subject/content area) by _____ percent by _____ (date)

Improving student achievement through policy

One direct way that a school council affects closing gaps in the school is through sound school council policies. These policies direct the way teaching and learning is implemented in the school.

The school council is legally responsible for determining the instructional practices that will be used at the school. That means the school council is required to have a policy stating the ways the students will be taught.

Let's review some policy basics. Good school council policy can help your school:

- Commit to using best practices
- Organize important work
- Build shared understanding and expectations
- Set consistent rules and responsibilities for day-to-day activities
- Provide flexibility for implementation of those rules and responsibilities
- Help parents and new staff understand how your school works
- Fulfill legal requirements
- Avoid litigation

Review the following instructional practices policy for Wildcat Middle School. Referring back to the policy basics list, make notes about the policy in the column to the right:

Instructional Practices Policy

Purpose:

The Instructional Practices Policy of Wildcat Middle School ensures that all instructional practices align with the districtwide curriculum maps.

Procedures:

Instructional practices shall be defined as the strategies, techniques and activities used by the classroom teacher to engage students in the learning process. Homework is to be used to extend the student's opportunity to learn.

Evaluation:

Professional Learning Community Team Leads will collect the data and bring to monthly Leadership meeting.

Reflection

How does your school's instructional practices policy compare with the above sample? Will your policy, as written, provide guidance to the school staff to close significant achievement gaps and reduce novice scores? What are your next steps?

Final Thoughts

As you go back to your school and your school council meetings, ponder the following:

1. Do I, as a school council member, understand the key issues in the school's current assessment scores to set appropriate targets for closing gaps?
2. Can I explain to parents, teachers and/or other staff members how the school council's work is focused on helping all students learn at high levels?
3. Does our school council spend most of its meeting time working on student achievement issues?